

Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex, Domiciliary No. 9
5101 Minnehaha Avenue South
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-74-G

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
19-G-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MINNESOTA VETERANS' HOME COMPLEX,
DOMICILIARY ~~BUILDING~~ NO. 9

HABS No. MN-74G

Location: 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis,
Hennepin County, Minnesota.

USGS St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;
483960:4973380; 484140:4972680; 483640:4973140

Present Owner: State of Minnesota
Department of Veterans' Affairs
St. Paul, Minnesota

Present Occupant: Minnesota Veterans' Home

Present Use: Housing for Senior Veterans

Significance: The Domiciliary Building No. 9 originally constructed as the Veterans' Homes main hospital facility in 1936, is one of 17 remaining structures built on a plot of land between the Mississippi River and Minnehaha Creek that the State of Minnesota acquired in 1887. The peninsula, originally named "Godfrey's Point", was donated to the State of Minnesota by the City of Minneapolis to use as its primary care facility for Veterans and their families beginning in 1888. The Domiciliary Building No. 9, built by the WPA in 1936, retains its historical significance, and coexists, with its Zigzage Moderne/Art Deco style with the other predominantly Richardsonian Romanesque buildings from the late 19th century, and, as well, is significant in its own right in its relation to the site and surroundings of the Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1934 - 1936. (Source: Dedication Plaque; Lobby, Domiciliary Building No. 9).
2. Architect: H. G. Bowstead, S.E.R.A. Project No. Henn. S100 B3 12.

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3. Original and Subsequent Owners: 1936 - Present: Veterans' Home of Minnesota.
4. Building, Contractor, Suppliers:

Builder: Joint Enterprise - Federal and State Emergency Relief Administrations.

Contractor: Unknown
5. Original Plans and Construction: Not Available
6. Alterations and Additions: The Hospital was converted into a domiciliary unit when the Residential care Facility was completed in 1973.

B. Historical Context:

The Soldiers' Home history began in 1851, with the procurement of land on the west side of the Mississippi River, specifically, the wooded point lying between the Mississippi and Brown's Creek (now known as Minnehaha Creek). A soldier from Fort Snelling, working as an agent for Ard Godfrey, made a claim for this particular piece of land, originally considered a part of the Fort Snelling Military Reservation. Mr. Godfrey was a millwright from Maine, who, at the bequest of Franklin Steele, a local miller and Minneapolis businessman, came to Minneapolis to oversee the erection of a mill and dam at Saint Anthony Falls.

Mr. Godfrey continued to work with the mills for five years, then, in 1853, he became Postmaster in Saint Anthony. It was at this time that Mr. Godfrey procured the property aforementioned on the Mississippi River and Minnehaha Creek. He moved to the land after title was obtained and began construction of a mill in 1853. After the mill was completed, Mr. Godfrey built a levee at the point of junction between the creek and the river, which was used as a steamboat landing. The river men named the area "Godfrey's Point".

In 1862, due to financial difficulties, Mr. Godfrey tendered 50 acres of his homestead to the City of Minneapolis, "Godfrey's Point", for \$1,000.00 per acre. When Ard Godfrey died in 1886, the City of Minneapolis acquired the land, 51 acres altogether, held it for a year, and then, in 1887, donated the land to the State of Minnesota to use as a new facility for a badly needed Veterans' Home.

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Construction of the original complex began in 1888 by Minneapolis Architect, Warren B. Dunnell, famous for his interpretations of Richardsonian Romanesque Architecture. The overall site plan and landscaping program was developed by Horace Cleveland, noted Landscape Architect for the City of Minneapolis. Construction of the building in the original complex took place over approximately a ten year period, from 1888 - 1899. Eight brick and stone buildings were completed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, according to the Cleveland/Dunnell plan. Of these, six structures remain today. The oldest surviving historic structures of the Veterans' Home Complex include: Domiciliary Building No. 1 (1888), Domiciliary Building No. 2 (1888), Domiciliary Building No. 4 (1891), Laundry Building No. 13 (1891), Administration Building No. 10 (1892), Main Dining Hall No. 7 (1902), and Domiciliary Building No. 6 (1905).

Construction of later structures also include: The Storage Building (1921), Ten-stall Garage (1925), Infirmary/Domiciliary Building No. 9 (1936), and Power Plant/Power House Building No. 14 (1937).

The Infirmary/Domiciliary Building No. 9 and the Power Plant were constructed as part of a joint enterprise of the Federal and State Emergency Relief Administrations' WPA projects. The projects were overseen by H. L. Richards, District Director of the WPA in Minneapolis, and H. G. Bowstead, Supervising Registered Architect.

The Veterans' Home of Minnesota has served as an important institution for over 100 years, providing care to Veterans from every war, Civil to Vietnam, as well as providing assistance and care to wives and children in many cases.

Aside from its function as a care facility, the Veterans' Home provides us with excellent examples of Richardsonian Romanesque Architecture, and, to a lesser extent, two good examples of WPA projects constructed in the Art Deco, or Zigzag Moderne style. In addition, its situation on its site and subsequent surroundings serve as one of the scenic, historic, and picturesque gems of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The Domiciliary Building No. 9 is a stepped structure, graduating from two stories on the outside to three in the middle section, and four stories in the center of the building. Built with a steel frame construction and a brick faced curtain wall, the building's main entry faces west of the

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Mississippi toward Minnehaha Creek, and its rear opens onto the bluff overlooking the river's lock and dam. The exterior is faced with brick and limestone, demonstrating its strength through its crisp, clean lines and subtle, Art Deco architectural detailing.

2. Condition of Fabric: The Domiciliary Building No. 9 has been well maintained and is structurally sound, with both interior and exterior features remaining in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Domiciliary Building No. 9 is located on the site of the Minnesota Veterans' Home, Section 17-28-23, Minneapolis Tract Index, part of N.E. 1/4 of S.W. 1/4. This area, being State property, is unplatted. The combined dimensions are 190 feet x 50 feet.

The Hospital/Domiciliary Building is divided into two north, two south, and a central section, each separated by brick fire walls. The central division is three bays wide and has four stories plus basement at garden level. The north and south divisions adjacent to the central division are six bays wide and three stories high, and their adjacent divisions are two bays wide and two stories high. Solariums two stories high with open balconies on the third level are at the far north and south divisions of the building. The building basement is at garden level and runs its entire length. An arched, partially underground tunnel runs underground from the Domiciliary Building No. 9 to Domiciliary Building No. 6. It is constructed in the same brick as the Domiciliary Building No. 9.

2. Foundations: Domiciliary Building No. 9 is supported by a limestone foundation.

3. Walls:

- a. North Elevation: The north facade has two stories, balconies over the solarium on the third floor. The solarium has three garden level windows, five windows on the first floor and five on the second floor. The two outside windows are approximately 18" x 24" and the three inside windows are 24" x 36".
- b. South Elevation: The partially exposed tunnel at garden level runs through the south elevation. The south facade is almost identical to the north facade; two stories, balconies over the solarium on the third floor, five windows on the first floor and five on the second. Pinkish buff Mankato limestone coursework accentuates the top of the second and third floors.

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- c. East Elevation: The east elevation faces the Mississippi, has a long, load bearing wall of brick over steel, and is stepped from two to three to four stories. The first floor has 16 windows, plus two more on the solariums. The second floor also has 16 windows, plus two for the solariums, and the third floor, 15 windows. The fourth floor has one single window located in the stairway in the center of the structure. Mankato stone details repeat those found around the entire structure.
- d. West Elevation: The west elevation, also stepped in two, three, and four story increments, has 16 windows on floor one, 19 windows on floor two, and 15 windows on floor three. There are no windows on the fourth floor. The main stairway and the most elaborate ornamentation and detailing is located on this facade.

Above each bay at the top of the building are stepped blocks of carved limestone depicting a variety of motifs. The large blocks are broken into quarters, and carved with Fern, Daisy, Morning Glory, and Corn motifs. The smaller blocks echo this same pattern, but also contain a carved Fleur de Lis motif. Brickwork is fired into a light, yellowish color with pink tones, and limestone details are neutral and buff color. Brickwork is varied and lighter in color at the top of the structure, due to replacement of many of the original brick members due to corrosion and weathering.

- 4. Structural System, Framing: Exterior wall divisions are load bearing, brick faced curtain walls, 12" thick, with fireproof construction, except for exposed steel in the floors and roof. Concrete floors and tile.
- 5. Main Stairway: The main stairway leading up to the building is approximately 30 feet wide with six foot wide stairs on either side of the main stairway descending under the main landing to the basement level, with the stairs on either side of the main stairway at the first level coming in at opposite north and south side and then meeting in the center to continue approximately five feet to the main doors. Pedestals on either side of the main stair hold marble and iron lamp posts, silver in color, Art Deco styled, with globes not indigenous to the original fixtures. Railings and doors are out of brushed steel with geometric lines and details. The main entry's doorway is faced with Mankato stone, and 2' x 4' dormerstyle windows flank the doors. Stairs and benches facing the street are black, pink, and buff granite. Patterns set in the granite on the balconies suggest decorative, abstract Masonic stone-cutter symbols.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and Doors: The west facades double main entrance doors, raised above ground, with an entrance to the lower level underneath it, in keeping with the Art Deco theme, are detailed in metalwork strips forming columnar-like posts on either side of the doors. The west facade also has two doors situated under the main porch, leading to a basement level. The east facade also has a small, nondescript opening out onto a small porch overlooking the Mississippi Rivers Lock and Dam.
 - b. Windows: All windows are basic, double hung, 2/2 aluminum framed windows, not original to the structure.
7. Roof: The entire structure's roof is a flat, built-up asphalt, fireproof roof. Firewalls rise 36" on the outside areas of the roof and 18" on the center part of the roof.
8. Cornerstone: A plaque on the cornerstone, located on the first by, garden level, south side of the west facade reads:

"To care for him who has been borne into battle"
Abraham Lincoln - November 11, 1934

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: The basement area is used primarily for storage. There are also some offices located on this level.
- b. First Floor: The first floor is divided into north and south divisions. The entryway is decorated in strips of pink and buff marble, with steel framing around the doorways, windows, and display cases. Inlaid stonework in pinks, blacks, buff, sand, and rust highlights the floor of the main lobby. The building is divided in half, with 12 rooms plus two bathrooms running along both east and west walls. Floors are of inlaid stone and walls are painted in oranges, browns, blues, greens. . . etc. Stairways run up to the third floor at both the north and south ends of the building, and a central stair behind the elevators on the east central side of the building runs up to the fourth floor.
- c. Second Floor: The second floor is almost identical to the first floor, except it has 27 rooms total. The solariums are located at either ends of the main hallway.

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- d. Third Floor: The third floor has 15 rooms total, most being double occupancy. Solariums are located on north and south ends of the floor.
 - e. Fourth Floor: The fourth floor is a false floor, serving strictly as elevator shaft, and housing electrical and plumbing devices.
- 2. Flooring: All floors are concrete with inlaid stonework that has been water sealed. Colors are black, white, yellow, and brown. The floor in the main lobby is inlaid with an abstract mosaic design, also reminiscent of the Masonic symbol. Colors here are buff, pink, black, sand, and rust colored stone. This floor is also sealed and glazed.
 - 3. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Walls are plastered and painted a variety of institutional colors: yellows, greens, oranges, tans, and browns. There is little decorative detail, no wallpaper, wainscoting. . . etc.
 - 4. Decorative Features: There is nothing to suggest that any decorative features on walls remain, if ever there were any. A green, black, and lime carpet, possibly remaining from the original furnishing of the building, is located in the third floor dayroom.
 - 5. Plaque: Located in the main lobby, the plaque is enclosed in one of the display cases and reads as follows:

Minnesota Soldiers Home
Founded A.D. 1887

Board of Trustees
A.D. 1935

Patrick E. Mc Cormack,	President
Herman Wigg,	Vice-President
Samuel R. Van Sant,	Treasurer
Richard D. O'Brien	Mrs. Emma W. Campbell
Samuel E. Mahan	Peter J. Newberg
Glen H. Davis,	Secretary

Hospital Building Committee

Ms. Emma W. Campbell,	Chairman
Patrick E. Mc Cormack	Herman Wigg
Major F. Wm. Pederson,	Glen H. Davis,
Commandant	Secretary

Dr. Oliver R. Bryant
Chief Medical Officer

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6. Hardware: Some original cast metal grates remain on assorted windows at Garden level.
7. Mechanical Equipment:
 - a. Heating: Hot water system with radiators on each floor. No air conditioning, aside from individual window units.
 - b. Lighting: Fluorescent lighting in halls and rooms. Natural lighting in solariums.
 - c. Elevators: Two frame-enclosed elevators with fire traps. Located in the northeast corner of the central division.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Domiciliary Building No. 9 was originally built as a hospital and long term care facility for residents of the Minnesota Veterans' Home. The main facade faces northwest toward Minnehaha Creek, with the rear of the structure facing the Mississippi River. The Domiciliary Building No. 9 is situated in the furthest northeast corner of the Soldiers' Home compound. It is accessible from either front or rear entrances, at Garden level and at the first floor level. there is a parking lot situated directly to its north.
2. Other Buildings in the Complex:
 - a. Domiciliary Building No. 1 (1888).
 - b. Domiciliary Building No. 2 (1888).
 - c. Domiciliary Building No. 4 (1891).
 - d. Domiciliary Building No. 5 (1891; Foundation only).
 - e. Domiciliary Building No. 6 (1905).
 - f. Main Dining Hall No. 7 (1902).
 - g. Administration Building No. 10 (1892).
 - h. Storage Building (1921).
 - i. Laundry No. 13 (1891).
 - j. Power House No. 14 (1937).

- k. Paint Shop and Garage (1899).
- l. Ten-stall Garage (1925).
- m. Steel Bridge (1908).
- n. Commissary No. 12 (1950).
- o. Chapel-Auditorium No. 15 (1962).
- p. Infirmary-Clinic No. 16 (1973).
- q. Residential Care No. 17 (1977).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Panorama/Early Views: The earliest views of the Soldiers' Home Complex can be found at the Map Library of the Minnesota Historical Society. These maps begin in 1867 and continue on through the mid-1900's.
- B. Photographs: Photographs showing general and specific views of the Soldiers' Home site were found in the Audio-Visual Collection of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Hennepin County Historical Society Photo Archives, Minneapolis, the History Collection at the Minneapolis Public Library, Minneapolis, and at the University of Minnesota's Northwest Architectural Archives, Minneapolis.
- C. Maps: The most useful maps found were the Sanborn Insurance Maps, dating from 1875 to 1940, located in the Map Library at the Minnesota Historical Society.
- D. Building Permits/Historical Articles: The Building Permits recorded at the Inspector of Buildings Department in Minneapolis, Minnesota, do not begin until 1950; because the Home was a State-run institution, Building Permits were not required. Historical articles can be found at the Soldiers' Home Museum on the grounds of the Minnesota Veterans' Home, or in numerous souvenir programs located at the Hennepin County Historical Society Archives dating from 1896 to 1945.
- E. Bibliography:
 - 1. Books:
History of Hennepin County. Weill and Williams. Minneapolis, Hennepin County Historical Society.

History of Minneapolis - Volume I. Atwater, Judge Issac and Col. John H. Stevens. Munsel Publishing, N.Y., N.Y. 1895. Hennepin County Historical Society.

Minnesota Territorial Pioneers No. 2. Minneapolis, Hennepin County Historical Society.

Bullock, Orin. The Restoration Manual. Norwalk, Connecticut: Silvermine Publishers, 1966.

Bezant, Barb and Alan K. Lathrop. Drafting a House History. Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1979.

Gebhard, David and Tom Martinson. A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota. Minneapolis, Minnesota; University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

McKee, Harley J. Recording Historic Buildings. Washington: National Park Service, 1976.

Upham, Warren. Minnesota Biographies. Minneapolis, 1912. Minnesota Historical Society.

2. Publications:

Ellsworth, Linda. The History of a House, How to Trace It. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1976, Technical Leaflet No. 89.

History Procedures Manual. Historic American Buildings Survey. Washington: National Parks Service, 1983.

Grand Army Reunion Journals. 1896, 1898, 1900, 1911, 1921, 1923, 1930, 1936, 1937, 1941, 1945. Minneapolis, Hennepin County Historical Society.

Minnesota Soldiers' Home Annual Reports. 1940, 1942, 1943, 1946. Minneapolis, Minnesota Historical Society.

3. Miscellaneous:

Minnesota Historical Society Audio Visual Library - Photograph Collection.

Building Inspector's Office. Minneapolis, Minnesota - Building Permits.

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Hennepin County Historical Society - Photograph and Map
Archives.

Minneapolis Public Library. Minneapolis History Collection -
Photograph and Newspaper Collections.

F. Research Calendars

- G. Original Architectural Drawings: Architectural drawings for the building were not found at the present time. However, there are extensive mechanical and architectural drawings of the Veterans' Home Site housed at the Power House No. 14 and the Minnesota State Department of Building Construction, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Prepared by:
Mark W. Haldeman
University of Minnesota
June, 1988

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5143, Historic Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Mark W. Haldeman, June, 1988.